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Viewing cable 06RIYADH6103, RIYADH RECORD: JULY 21-29 2006

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06RIYADH6103**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06RIYADH6103	2006-08-01 15:34	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Riyadh

Appears in these articles:

[not](#)
[yet](#)
[set](#)

VZCZCXYZ0023
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHRH #6103/01 2131534
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 011534Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0186
INFO RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH 7530

S E C R E T RIYADH 006103

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: RIYADH RECORD: JULY 21-29 2006

REF: A. A) RIYADH 5876

[1](#)B. B) RIYADH 6038
[1](#)C. C) RIYADH 5952
[1](#)D. D) RIYADH 5907.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Saudi mood, as reflected in critical statements issued by clerics and appearing on internet chat sites, is becoming increasingly anti-U.S. Debate abounds among religious scholars who continue to raise the issue of Shi'a versus Sunni and the question of whether Saudis should support Hizballah. King Abdullah met with President Abbas and President Mubarak and telephoned a Lebanese Parliamentarian and French President Chirac on the crisis in Palestine and Lebanon. The Foreign Minister engaged in shuttle diplomacy, traveling to Washington, London and Moscow to push for a cease fire in Lebanon. The Majlis al-Shoura issued a statement denouncing Israeli actions in the region; in media interviews, members of the council spoke about the role of women consultants in the council. Crown Prince Sultan signed two military cooperation agreements in France, but no new deals were finalized. END SUMMARY.

LEBANON CRISIS

¶2. (S) The Saudi public mood is increasingly negative towards the United States because of the crisis in Lebanon. There are daily op-ed pieces condemning U.S. support for Israel and "unwillingness" to call for an immediate cease-fire. Many Saudi clerics, academics, and intellectuals have issued statements to this effect on both conservative and moderate websites. There was a massive outpouring of public statements of anger and sadness regarding the situation in Lebanon (Ref A and septel).

¶3. (C) Recently, three revered Wahhabi sheikhs issued advisory opinions on their own authority on the question of support for Hizballah. On July 17, prominent Wahhabi Sheikh Abdullah bin Jabreen issued an advisory opinion, reported as a fatwa declaring it impermissible for Muslims to support Hizballah in any manner, including through prayers. In contrast, another prominent conservative religious scholar, Salman al-Oudah, issued an advisory opinion July 22, also reported as a fatwa, that emphasized the need for Shi'a and Sunnis to unite against Israeli aggression. This sentiment was echoed on July 25 by Sheikh Nasir al-Omar, a conservative cleric known for his stance against Hizballah, who issued a long commentary on a conservative website discussing the need to unite against Zionist aggression. He also criticized the role of the U.S. government in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq (Ref B).

¶4. (C) On July 26, state-owned Saudi television channel 1 aired a telethon to raise cash to support the Lebanese people. The campaign was successful, with approximately \$29 million raised. Additionally, the SAG pledged \$1.5 billion to support Lebanon's reconstruction efforts and stabilize its economy. Several extremist websites, along with some mainstream media, criticized the government's humanitarian assistance, arguing that the SAG did not have public consent to donate these funds, and that there was no public accountability. One posting on the al-Sahat website posed the following questions: "Imagine that such decisions cannot be passed before being approved by a free and elected Shoura Council. Could such decision be passed? Is it reasonable that the public funds are the private property of the King who can spend it as he likes?"

PALESTINIAN CRISIS

¶5. (U) King Abdullah met with President Abbas in Jeddah on July 29 to discuss the Palestinian situation, in a bid to increase support as well as distinguish the Palestinian crisis from the Lebanese crisis. President Abbas thanked King Abdullah for his financial assistance to the Palestinian people and praised the Saudi position regarding the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent state

with Jerusalem as its capital. President Abbas and King Abdullah also dealt with current events in the Palestinian territories and blamed the "Israeli war machine" for the humanitarian crisis, increased bloodshed, and the continuing destruction of Palestinian infrastructure.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

¶6. (C) The Majlis al-Shoura (Council) continued issuing advisory opinions, including a statement condemning Israel's acts against the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples. In a July 23 statement, the Council denounced the targeting of civilians and infrastructure in Lebanon as a "flagrant violation" of international treaties and laws, and called on the world community to condemn Israeli aggression, in addition to urging accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative approved during the 14th Arab summit in Beirut in 2002. This statement illustrates the Shoura Council's increasing presence in the political forum, albeit by taking a popular stance that neither condemns nor praises Hizballah and is in line with the SAG's pronouncements.

¶7. (U) The Vice President of the Council, along with one of the recently-appointed women consultants, Dr. Bahija Ezze, appeared in the media commending the new role of women in the quasi-legislature. Dr. Ezze explained the role of women consultants as providing opinions on issues pertaining to women through the Social and Family Affairs Committee. Although critics condemned the limitations placed on the women consultants, Dr. Ezze is confident that this gradual approach towards increasing women's rights is the right one. She stated that, "The final goal is processing and preparation for the positive participation of women. I expect that there would be permanent participation of women in the council soon. We trust in the vision and caution of our wise government that puts women in the right place at the right time."

VIP VISITS

¶8. (C) King Abdullah and Egyptian President Mubarak met July 25 to consult on the Lebanon crisis. Stating that Saudi Arabia and Egypt hold identical views on the situation, both leaders called for an immediate cease-fire, warning that continued Israeli aggression could engulf the entire region in war. Additionally, King Abdullah issued a royal statement warning that continued Israeli aggression could produce "dangerous results," and cautioned that "patience cannot go on forever and if the Israeli military savagery continues to kill and destroy, no one can predict what would happen, and if the forbidden takes place, regret would be useless." (Ref C).

¶9. (C) Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal traveled to Washington, London, and Moscow to meet with leaders to lobby for a cessation of hostilities in Lebanon. Following his July 23 trip to Washington, the Foreign Minister met with Iraqi Premier al-Maleki in London on July 25 to discuss the situations in both Iraq and Lebanon. Also on July 25, the Foreign Minister met with Russian President Putin in Moscow. Additionally, King Abdullah had telephone conversations with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berry and French President Chirac to discuss the situation in Lebanon. This level of diplomatic activity is unusual for the SAG and demonstrates their commitment to this issue.

US DEFENSE CONTRACTS

¶10. (S) Crown Prince Sultan, who is also the Saudi Minister of Defense and Aviation, signed two defense cooperation agreements with France during his July 20 visit to Paris. Media reports have suggested that these agreements could lead to Saudi contracts for the purchase of French

tanker aircraft, helicopters, and other equipment. However, Embassy contacts report that, while there may well be some eventual purchases of French technology, no new deals were finalized during the Crown Prince's visit, and Saudi purchase of French military hardware remains uncertain. A July 24 article in Paris La Tribune notes "the disappointment felt by certain industrialists who were expecting a great deal more from the visit." One of the agreements signed was reportedly a technical addendum to a 1982 KSA-France defense cooperation agreement (Ref D).

OBERWETTER